

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 29, 2011

John Kline, Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
Dear Chairman Kline,

We write to request that your committee hold a hearing to consider our bill, H.R. 2501, the Fair Employment Opportunity Act of 2011, which would make it unlawful for an employer to take into account an individual's unemployment status during the screening process.

This legislative initiative is critical because we have seen ample evidence that unemployed individuals are increasingly falling prey to discriminatory practices eliminating their opportunities to be considered for employment. Large, medium and small corporations are posting job announcements that state candidates must be "currently employed" to apply.

With the national unemployment rate currently standing at 9.2 percent and hovering there for over 2 years, we must do everything in our power to ensure that the 6 million Americans who have been unemployed for more than six months have a fair chance at employment. In an economy in which unemployed workers are competing with tens and sometimes hundreds of others for every available job opening, it is unjust to impair reemployment by allowing employers to disregard a candidate because the worker is unemployed. Some examples of this discriminatory practice are:

- Allstate Insurance, Position for Licensed P&C Team Member in Huntsville, Alabama "must be currently employed"
- Beacon Hill Staffing Group, Paralegal position, Atlanta, Georgia, "must be currently employed"
- University of Phoenix, Professor position, Fresno, California, "must be currently employed"

The "Fair Employment Opportunity Act of 2011" would make it unlawful for an employer to include such discriminatory language in job postings or to request that an employment agency take into account an individual's unemployment status during the screening process. The exclusion of unemployed applicants is a troubling and arbitrary screen that is bad for the unemployed, bad for the economy, and, ultimately, bad for America. The President's proposal, the American Jobs Act, includes a provision that would make it unlawful to refuse to hire applicants solely because they are unemployed or to include in a job posting a provision that unemployed persons will not be considered.

Chairman Kline, we urge you to send a strong message to all Americans whose lives have been disrupted by unemployment through no fault of their own and hold a hearing on this important and timely issue.

Sincerely,



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson Jr.
Member of Congress